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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



PAOLO SANTALUCIA APPOINTED AS THE NEXT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF SOULPEPPER THEATRE

A innovative arts leader and Soulpepper Academy alum, **Paolo Santalucia** joins Executive Director **Gideon Arthurs** to guide the company into a bold new chapter — rooted in legacy and driven by a vision that's shaped for the next generation.



Photo by Dahlia Katz

Toronto, ON – The Board of Directors of **Soulpepper Theatre** are thrilled to announce that following a wide-reaching national search, acclaimed Toronto-based multi-hyphenate artist and arts leader, **Paolo Santalucia** has been appointed as the company's next Artistic Director. A celebrated creative force in Canadian theatre, Santalucia will step into the role at the end of **Weyni Mengesha**'s transformative seven-year tenure and will join Executive Director **Gideon Arthurs** in leading the company into its next chapter.

“Paolo is an award-winning director, performer and artistic leader, with deep roots at Soulpepper, and rich leadership experience at Crow’s Theatre and The Howland Company” said Robin Cardozo, Chair of the Board of Directors. “His passion for the performing arts, commitment to collaborative and inclusive leadership, and his deeply held personal values will be powerful drivers for Soulpepper’s continued success.”

A graduate of the Soulpepper Academy, **Santalucia** has been part of the Soulpepper family for over a decade. His appointment is not just a homecoming — it signals an exciting step forward in the company’s evolution. A trailblazing next-generation artist, **Santalucia** brings a rare combination of creative range, collaborative spirit, and deep institutional knowledge. His appointment also continues a powerful legacy of Soulpepper Academy alumni rising into leadership roles within the company — including his predecessor **Weyni Mengesha**.

“I am deeply grateful and humbled by this appointment. It’s an extraordinary honour to return to a place that so powerfully shaped my artistic life, and to serve a company whose work has helped redefine what Canadian theatre means for my generation” said Paolo Santalucia. “I believe theatre is an engine for building community—a lightning rod that gives people a stake in the place they call home. Soulpepper is exactly that: a galvanizing force that inspires civic pride and exemplifies the world-class work we are capable of creating here. I’m proud to have been shaped by it, proud to follow Weyni’s transformative tenure, and profoundly excited to help steward the next chapter of this extraordinary institution.”

Dynamic and multi-disciplinary, **Santalucia** is a highly sought-after artist whose work has resonated across Canada and beyond. In addition to his current role as Associate Artistic Director at Crow’s Theatre, he was a co-founding member of The Howland Company, and has worked across some of Canada’s leading organizations including Tarragon Theatre, Factory Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, The Grand Theatre, Manitoba Theatre for Young People, and Young People’s Theatre to name a few. Internationally, he’s worked with the Chicago Broadway Playhouse and New York’s prestigious Pershing Square Signature Center. A fixture of Toronto’s creative landscape, Santalucia has spent over two decades embedded in the city’s artistic heartbeat – shaping its theatrical output, championing new voices, and contributing to a bold contemporary vision for the next generation of Canadian theatre.

“I am so excited to enter into this next chapter of Soulpepper’s evolution with Paolo. His infectious energy, deep capacity for listening and learning, and commitment to delivering what audiences are truly seeking will mean that our momentum as a company will only continue to accelerate.” said Gideon Arthurs, Executive Director of Soulpepper Theatre. “Paolo is part of the extended Soulpepper family and will be an extraordinary steward for many years to come.”

Santalucia’s appointment comes at a pivotal moment for Soulpepper, as the company embarks on an ambitious period of growth and transformation guided by its new strategic plan [Stories for a Stronger City](#) . Focused on harnessing the social power of storytelling to combat urban isolation and foster connection, the plan outlines a bold vision: doubling the work on Soulpepper’s stages, expanding free community programming, transforming its home into a cultural hub, and building meaningful partnerships across the sector. As a rising star with a proven track record of artistic excellence and collective creation, Santalucia not only reflects the evolving identity of Soulpepper and the communities it serves but is also uniquely positioned to lead the company into this next phase of its legacy.

Central to this vision is a deepened commitment to collaboration — a priority that will continue to grow under **Santalucia**’s leadership. Through its Creative Collaboration Initiative (CCI), Soulpepper is already strengthening relationships across the Toronto theatre industry, with over 10 co-producing companies joining the 2025/26 season. At the same time, the multi-year strategic partnership with Crow’s Theatre remains a cornerstone of this strategy, anchoring a shared dedication to artistic innovation, audience development, and ambitious new play

development. These initiatives collectively reflect a unified goal: to build a more vibrant, interconnected cultural ecosystem —both locally and nationally — with Soulpepper at the heart of it all.

Soulpepper's Artistic Director Search Committee convened in early 2025, composed of Board members, staff, and community leaders. Executive search consulting services were provided by Searchlight partners. The committee considered candidates from across Canada and was deeply encouraged by the depth of vision and leadership presented by the field.

Paolo Santalucia will begin his tenure as Artistic Director on September 1, 2025 and will curate the company's 2026/27 Season.

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ABOUT SOULPEPPER THEATRE | soulpepper.ca

At Soulpepper, we believe in the transformative power of art to unite people and build a more inclusive and resilient society. Situated in Toronto's Historic Distillery District, our mission is to harness this power to inspire and bring together diverse communities. Our commitment to Radical Inclusion drives us to break down barriers and create a space that is open to everyone. Our commitment to artists drives us to foster their creativity and innovate the ways we work to help them thrive.

Our commitment to our community drives us to throw open our doors and bring people together.

Now in our 27th season, we produce works year-round and offer educational and community programs to hundreds of youth and our local community. Our deep investment in the creative process is evident on stage, with acclaimed productions such as **The Brothers Size**, **'da Kink in my Hair**, **Three Sisters**, and **Kim's Convenience** earning awards and international acclaim. Since 2006, the Soulpepper Academy has graduated 82 remarkable artists.

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